



# General Management Plan News

August 2007

## Park Developing General Management Plan

### Greetings,

*The National Park Service is pleased to announce that the development of a general management plan to guide the future of Fort Matanzas National Monument is underway. The general management plan and accompanying environmental impact statement will serve as the blueprint for the future management of the park.*

*You are invited to participate in the development of the plan in the months to come. This newsletter provides general background and contact information on this important effort and information on how you can participate. We hope you will join us at the upcoming public meetings to express your thoughts and ideas so that together we can plan for the future of Fort Matanzas National Monument.*

Gordon Wilson  
Superintendent

### Understanding the General Management Plan

All parks in the National Park System are required to develop a general management plan (GMP). The GMP represents the broadest level of planning conducted by the National Park Service (NPS). It will describe the general path the NPS intends to follow in managing Fort Matanzas National Monument for 15- 20 years. GMPs are developed in consultation with NPS program managers, interested parties, and the general public and focus on what resource conditions and visitor experiences are appropriate and should be achieved and maintained over time. General management planning provides

broad guidance about the best way to achieve resource protection and visitor experience goals. Specific details regarding facility construction, interpretive program development, and maintenance techniques will be specified in implementation plans, such as resource management plans and interpretive plans that tier off the GMP. These plans are separate from the GMP.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and NPS policy, the GMP will be combined with an environmental impact statement (EIS). The GMP/EIS will identify significant issues and concerns, present a reasonable range of management alternatives, and analyze the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives.

### General Management Plan Process

The GMP/EIS process involves the following steps:

- Initiate Project and Define Planning Context

The planning team assembles, customizes the planning process, and begins to establish contacts with participants. The team examines why the park was established, affirms its purpose and significance, collects and analyzes data, and gathers public comments. Public meetings are held.

- Develop, Present, and Evaluate Alternatives

Using staff and public input, the team explores what the park might look like in the future and presents a range of management alternatives through a series of public meetings.

- Prepare Draft Document

The team publishes the Draft GMP/EIS. The draft document describes the alternatives and the potential environmental impacts. Based on an impact analysis of each alternative and public input, the team selects a preferred alternative and presents it in the document. Public meetings are held.

- Publish Final Document

Based on review by the NPS and the public, the planning team revises the GMP/EIS and publishes a final plan. The plan is approved by the National Park Service Southeast Region Director.

- Implement the Approved Plan

The GMP/EIS is implemented, as funding allows.

### Public Meeting Schedule

We would like to invite you to attend either of the open house meetings listed below so the NPS can obtain your comments and suggestions and answer any questions you might have.

Location:

**University of Florida Whitney  
Laboratory for Marine Bioscience**  
Lohman Auditorium  
9505 Ocean Shore Blvd. (AIA)  
St. Augustine, FL 32080  
904-461-4019

The meeting schedule is as follows:

September 18, 2007 3:00-7:00 pm

September 19, 2007 3:00-7:00 pm

Each open house session will feature a brief slide presentation at 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm.



## Background of Fort Matanzas National Monument

Fort Matanzas National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation No. 1713 (43 Stat. 1968) on October 15, 1924. The War Department administered it until transferred to the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, by Executive Order. Subsequent donations and acquisitions have greatly expanded the park from its original size. Today, Fort Matanzas National Monument consists of 298 acres located on Rattlesnake Island and Anastasia Island. These two islands lie along the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and the Matanzas estuary, about 14 miles south of St. Augustine, Florida.

The story of Fort Matanzas has always been closely linked with St. Augustine and the Castillo de San Marcos, which served as the city's chief defensive structure for many years. Since its founding in 1565, the outpost town of St. Augustine had been the heart of Spain's coastal defense system in Florida. After the completion of the Castillo in 1695, the town still had a glaring weakness—the Matanzas Inlet. The inlet allowed easy access to the Matanzas River, by which enemy vessels could attack St. Augustine. In 1740 troops from the British Colony of Georgia blockaded St. Augustine Inlet and began a 39-day siege of the town. The British eventually retreated and the Spanish immediately sought to fortify Matanzas Inlet, realizing that British control of this strategic entry to the river could ultimately lead to surrender of the town.

Construction of a masonry fort began soon thereafter. In 1742, with the fort near completion, the British positioned twelve ships near the inlet. The fort's cannons were able to drive off the British scouting boats and the ships.

Besides warning St. Augustine of enemy vessels, the fort also served as a rest stop, coast guard station, and a place where vessels

heading for St. Augustine could get advice on navigating the river. Its primary mission, though, was maintaining control of the Matanzas Inlet. After thwarting the British advance in 1742, the fort never again fired its guns in battle.

In addition, the park provides a natural habitat rich in wildlife with the salt marsh, scrub, and maritime hammock protecting endangered and threatened species.

## Purpose and Significance of Fort Matanzas National Monument

Purpose statements are based on the park's legislative history and NPS policies. The statements reaffirm the reasons why the park was established as a unit of the National Park System and provide the foundation for park management and use. Purpose statements also help neighbors, visitors, and other users understand the framework in which managers make decisions.

### The purpose of Fort Matanzas National Monument is:

- To preserve the masonry tower and its associated cultural landscapes and archeological resources.
- To provide an accurate historical perspective of what military life was like in Florida as it existed at this isolated outpost.
- To manage and care for all resources within the park for the benefit of future generations through a comprehensive program of

preservation, interpretation, and education.

- To permit recreational opportunities on Rattlesnake Island and Anastasia Island that do not impair park resources.

Significance statements capture the essence of the park's importance to the nation's natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements describe the park's distinctiveness and provide direction for park managers to make decisions that preserve resources and values consistent with the national monument's purpose.

### Fort Matanzas National Monument is nationally significant because:

- The fort is the only example of a fortified watchtower of Spanish architecture in the continental United States.
- The fort is a completely intact component of the St. Augustine defense system constructed by the Spanish.
- The site commemorates the slaughter of over 200 French Huguenot soldiers by Spanish soldiers in 1565 – an event which marked the beginning of 235 years of Spanish dominance in Florida.
- The location provides a rare opportunity for visitors to experience an historic setting as it might have appeared hundreds of years ago.
- The monument preserves nearly 300 acres of a virtually undisturbed barrier island system containing dunes, marsh, maritime forest, and associated flora and fauna, including threatened and endangered species.

